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COUNTRY FOR LIFE | JULY 13, 2015

Country Weekly

NEW LOOK!

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5 songs that
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life

SOUTHERN GENTLEMAN

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IN PRINT

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2010 SATURDAY, JULY 10



A-List Wedding

The year's most anticipated wedding took place on July 10, 2010, when **CARRIE UNDERWOOD** and NHL hockey star **MIKE FISHER** tied the knot. And by all accounts, Carrie and Mike did it up right. The couple exchanged vows at a Southern-style ceremony by the lake at the Ritz-Carlton Lodge, Reynolds Plantation, in Georgia, which made for a beautiful setting. And talk about a celebrity guest list! Tim McGraw and wife Faith Hill, Garth Brooks and *American Idol* judges Paula Abdul and Simon Cowell were just a few of the A-list attendees. Carrie looked stunning in a Chantilly lace dress created for her by famed designer Monique Lhuillier. The celebrity couple was engaged on Dec. 20 of the previous year but had not revealed many details about their wedding. Now they're about to celebrate their fifth anniversary.

2015

JULY 7:
MADDIE & BIRTHDAY

MADDIE MARLOW

of the duo **MADDIE & TAE** says farewell to her teenage years as she turns the magical age of 20. Maddie was born July 7, 1995, in Sugar Land, Texas.



at Hickory Hill Lakes Ft Loramie, OH
Country Concert '15

JULY 9-11: MIDWEST FEST

Check out a fabulous lineup of performers at one of country's longest-running festivals when **COUNTRY CONCERT '15** hits Hickory Hills Lake in Fort Loramie, Ohio, on July 9-11. **FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE**, **CARRIE UNDERWOOD**, **JAKE OWEN**, **THE BAND PERRY** and **CHRIS YOUNG** are just a few of the stars on board for the 35th annual bash. For tickets and extra info, visit countryconcert.com.

JULY 11: FREEDOM WRITER

CMT presents another in its series of original documentaries, *Morgan*

Spurlock Presents Freedom! The Movie, on July 11 at 9 p.m. ET. The documentary from acclaimed filmmaker and writer



MORGAN SPURLOCK takes a comedic look at independence and explores what freedom really means to regular Americans.

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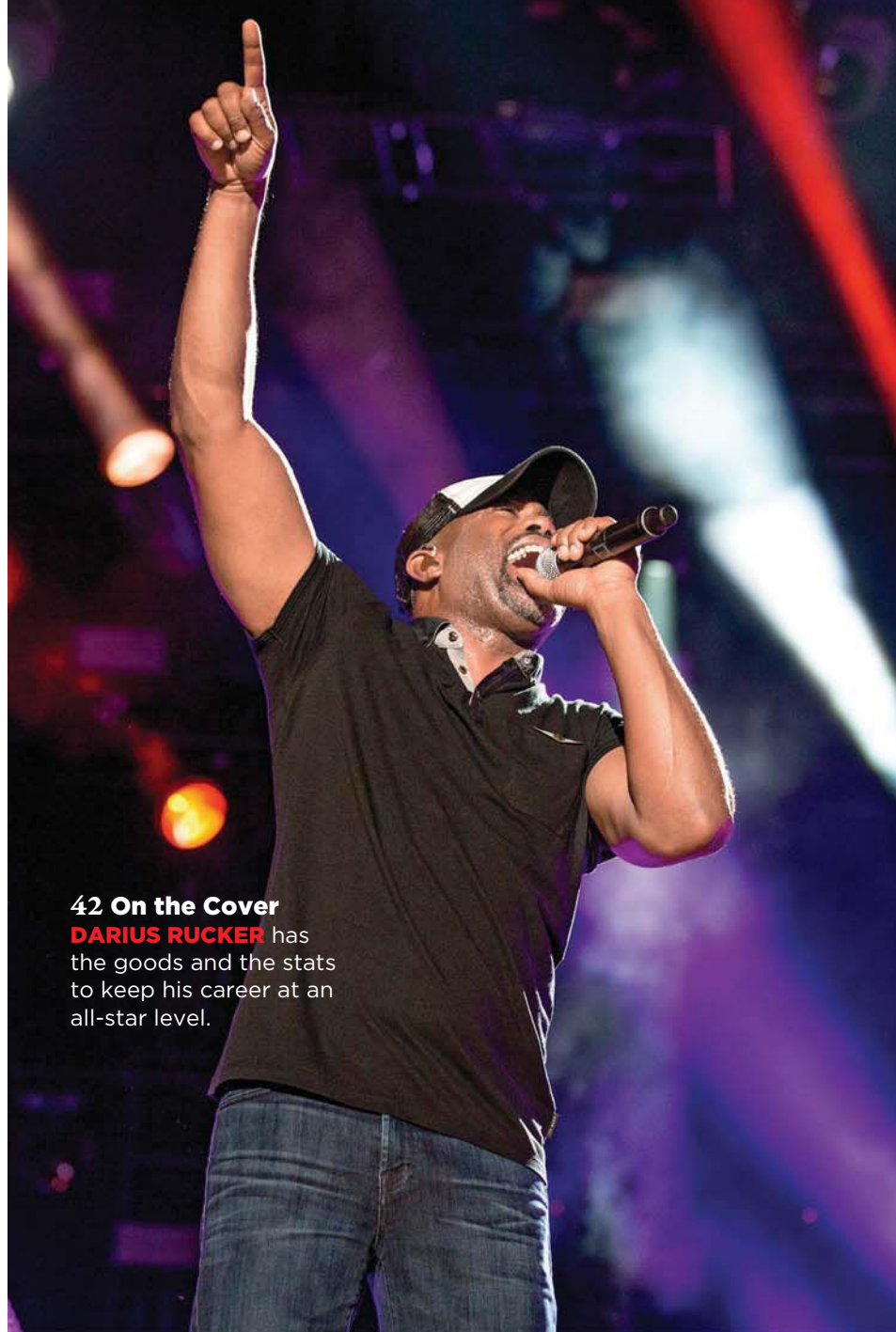
The wheels are in high-speed motion for his upcoming new album.

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We remember the beloved Grand Ole Opry legend.

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DARIUS RUCKER has the goods and the stats to keep his career at an all-star level.

PLUS!

NASH
NEXT

27 Talk to MICKEY GUYTON and

you'll find a young lady who's wanted to be a country star since her childhood in Texas. Now she's realizing that dream with a new EP and a tour with Brad Paisley.



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FROM THE EDITOR



Dear Readers,

Darius Rucker has made a name for himself in country music. And that name is not Hootie & the Blowfish. Although a great band, Darius has successfully transitioned from rock star to country star. He has gone where many before him (and probably after) have failed to go. One is always leery when an artist coming from a different genre decides to make a country album, but Darius knows the music. Our deputy editor, Jim Casey, sat down with Darius to

discuss his flawless transition. The superstar opens up about his foray into country, how he changed the minds of naysayers and his undying love of sports.

In case you missed it, we bring you highlights from this year's CMA Music Festival, which took place in Nashville in June. We have everything you might have missed, from the concerts at LP Field to the *Nash Country Weekly* kick-off party with Sam Hunt. So check out our coverage. It'll almost be like you were there!

On a sad note, the music industry has had to say goodbye to the wonderful Jim Ed Brown, who along with his sisters brought many songs to life. Although I only met him once, he was a friend of the magazine and giant talent, kind and welcoming to all. On page 52 of this issue, we take a look at the life of the 2015 Country Music Hall of Fame inductee.

In this week's NASH Next section, we spotlight newcomer Mickey Guyton. Mickey sat down with senior writer Bob Paxman to talk about family, her journey into country music and her fiery single "Better Than You Left Me."

Don't miss next week's issue, on stands July 13, as we look at the Women of Country.

SEE YOU NEXT WEEK!


LISA KONICKI, EDITOR IN CHIEF

Thank you @countryweekly for keeping it real. I agree Luke's "Kick the Dust Up" is very disappointing. Just say no to #BroCountry!



CINDY L. TANGORRA
@cindytangorra

HURRY UP!



I loved your Hall of Fame article in the March 23 issue. Tammy Ragusa was spot on with Hank Jr. Unfortunately the election committee didn't think so. I sure hope they get it right soon before we are all dead and gone.



SHARILYN NORTON
Omaha, Neb.

FACEBOOK

Love Travis Tritt. Hope to hear new music from him.



KATHRYN
NANA SMITH

WTG, Blake ["Blake Shelton Rescues a Stranded Motorist in Oklahoma," *CountryWeekly.com*]. That's nice of you to help that man out, most people wouldn't these days.



STELLA
GILBERT

So hate to see this ["Joey + Rory's Joey Martin Feek Battling Stage IV Cancer," *CountryWeekly.com*]. I could listen to Joey sing all day every day. Pray for healing.



AMY
ZARATE

FROM THE READER



Shoot us an email, a comment or a tweet and let us know what you think!

TWITTER

Thanks @countryweekly for letting me share my #Bronco story with y'all. Turned out great!



CANAAN SMITH
@canaansmith

@countryweekly @BrantleyGilbert Thanks a million for sharing BG with us! And I have my fingers crossed that we will see more BG pics.



KESLEY
@26_Kesley_26

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- Jana Kramer



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FIRST TAKE

MISSING "WINK"

Neal McCoy reaches out for one fan's hand during his high-energy set at Nashville's LP Field during CMA Music Festival on Sunday, June 14.





THE COUNTRY BREW

A SWEET TASTE OF ALL THINGS COUNTRY

Opening Act

WAYLON, WILLIE AND THE BOYS

The stars at night will be bigger and brighter when **WILLIE NELSON, KRIS KRISTOFFERSON** and a slew of kindred spirits salute the late **WAYLON JENNINGS** on July 6 at The Moody Theater in Austin, Texas. **OUTLAW: CELEBRATING THE MUSIC OF WAYLON JENNINGS** also features performances from **TOBY KEITH, ERIC CHURCH, KACEY MUSGRAVES, RYAN BINGHAM, STURGILL SIMPSON, JAMEY JOHNSON, LEE ANN WOMACK** and **CHRIS STAPLETON**. Waylon's son **SHOOTER**, wife **JESSI COLTER** and friend **BILLY JOE SHAVER** will also be on hand for the event. If you can't make it to Texas for this once-in-a-lifetime concert, it will be filmed for distribution at a later date. Additionally, proceeds from the after-party will be donated to United Way to help victims of flooding in central Texas.

Illustration by Drew Bardana



(Clockwise from above) **ROLLING ON THE RIVERFRONT** Dustin Lynch does his best to embody the Selfie Stick with a fan at Riverfront Stage during CMA Music Festival; **IN HARMONY'S WAY** Phil Vassar and Jo Dee Messina put their voices together for a little duet; **FUTURE'S SO BRIGHT** Jamie Lynn Spears wisely wore shades for her CMA Music Festival performance.





(Clockwise from above) **POINT AT YOU** Tanya Tucker makes a triumphant return to performing at CMA Music Festival; **SCHOOL PORTRAIT** Little Big Town hangs out with some new friends as part of CMA's Music Education Matters initiative; **AXES TO GRIND** Guitar-slinging duo Striking Matches warms up the crowd gathered at Bud Light Stage at Bridgestone Arena Plaza.



SM by Hunter Berry/CMA; Tanya by Natasha Moustache/CMA; LBT & students by Caitlin Harris/CMA

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Good grief Charlie Brown, has it been that long?

Peanuts debuted October 2, 1950. 2015 marks its 65th anniversary. You can almost see Snoopy doing his happy dance now! Peanuts quickly skyrocketed to success and became one of the longest running, most popular comic strips in the world—much to the delight of creator Charles Schulz.

What's next? A world exclusive of course!

Almost from the beginning, everyone's favorite Peanuts characters found their way onto T-shirts, calendars and lunch boxes. Now, America's favorite beagle has found his way onto a commemorative coin. Masterfully struck by England's Pobjoy Mint, the reverse depicts Snoopy, and his feathered sidekick Woodstock hanging out on the doghouse. This officially-licensed, legal-tender copper-nickel coin is the first to honor Peanuts 65th anniversary. Claim yours today from the official distributor, GovMint.com!

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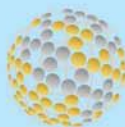
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(Above) **SUNNY OUTLOOK** Dan Smyers (left) and Shay Mooney of Dan + Shay soak up the sun; (left) **DYNAMITE COMBO** Wynonna Judd and Brenda Lee sign a guitar at Music City Center; (below) **NICE TRY, BUT YOU CAN'T JOIN THE BAND** The Swon Brothers' Colton Swon lets a fan sing his parts; (opposite, from top) **COOL PRANK, BRO** Kelsea Ballerini totally gets clowned by Kristian Bush; **HERO WORSHIP** Lauren Alaina is mildly excited to be meeting Lonestar.





JOE NICHOLS



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Walk the Walk

Country music legend **LORETTA LYNN** added another accolade to her Hall of Fame résumé on June 4 as she was inducted into Nashville's Music City Walk of Fame with her friend and producer **JACK WHITE** of The White Stripes and The Raconteurs. The pair has collaborated on several music projects together, including Loretta's 2004 Grammy-winning album, *Van Lear Rose*. Loretta and Jack join the likes of **ELVIS PRESLEY, HANK WILLIAMS, KID ROCK, VINCE GILL, DOLLY PARTON, ALAN JACKSON** and **KINGS OF LEON**, among others, as inductees into the Walk of Fame, which has been inducting members since 2006. The special ceremony also included a ribbon cutting for the newly renovated Walk of Fame Park, which had been closed for eight months.

SHINING A LIGHT OF HOPE

Donna Fargo sang, *You can't be a beacon if your light don't shine*, and **MARTINA McBRIDE**'s light certainly shines brightly. So congratulations are in order for the "Wild Angels" singer, who was presented with Covenant House's Beacon of Hope Award for her work on behalf of homeless and trafficked youth. "As a mother, it is heartbreaking to know there are children suffering and struggling on their own," says Martina. "And as a celebrity being blessed to achieve success throughout my career, it is my responsibility to help. I am so humbled and proud to share the Beacon Award with the dedicated members of Team Martina. I hope this is a reminder that every effort can make a difference." Martina was recognized during the 2015 Night of Broadway Stars at Lincoln Center.



Martina and Covenant House president Kevin Ryan with two Covenant House residents



Oh Carole!

In early 2014, country vocalists joined artists from every conceivable genre to pay tribute to pop songwriting legend Carole King when she was honored as the MusiCares Person of the Year. Now you can enjoy that magical

evening for yourself with the just-released DVD **A MUSICARES TRIBUTE TO CAROLE KING**. Performances include **MIRANDA LAMBERT** on the classic "It Might as Well Rain Until September," **MARTINA McBRIDE** on "One Fine Day," **KACEY MUSGRAVES** and Miguel teaming up for "Crying in the Rain" and **JENNIFER NETTLES** on "Been to Canaan." Proceeds from the sale of the DVD help support MusiCares, which provides assistance for musicians in need.



LES PAUL AT 100

On Tuesday, June 9, a who's who of guitar slingers and musicians gathered in New York to kick off **LES PAUL'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**, commemorating the influential musician, songwriter and inventor who is known to many as the "father of modern music." Gathered at the event were Warren Hayes, Steve Miller, Journey's Neal Schon, Steve Vai, Luther Dickinson and Joe Bonamassa.

In Nashville, Mayor Karl Dean declared it Les Paul Day and Peter Frampton accepted a presentation on Les Paul's behalf. Gibson Guitars, the Nashville-based guitar company that makes the iconic instrument with the Les Paul name, supplied \$100,000 to Belmont University to fund research projects in Les' honor.

Les, born Lester William Polsfuss, pioneered the solid-body electric guitar and paved the way for rock 'n' roll. He died in 2009 at the age of 94.



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Lee Brice celebrates with wife Sara; (below left) "Drinkin' Class" writers (from left) Ed Hill, David Frasier and Josh Kear receive congratulations from Lee.

Not giving up, taking pride in your work and being proud of where you came from were the themes of the No. 1 party at Nashville's Pour House to celebrate Lee Brice's chart-topping "Drinking Class."

When Lee first heard "Drinking Class," he envisioned it being a huge song that would be relatable to many people, and it reminded him of growing up working for his dad. "Before he had a tractor trencher that would dig ditches, I was his trencher with a shovel," Lee said. "I remember having to dig two feet deep and 20 feet wide through a concrete parking lot. When the shovel started bending, Daddy told



me to figure it out. I learned that quitting isn't an option. The job had to be done."

Songwriters David Frasier, Ed Hill and Josh Kear saw an opportunity to write about their families. "Our experiences guided this song," said Josh. "David started out working on an oil rig, Ed painted houses and I cleaned

[Nashville's] Harding Mall. We've all worked some really hard jobs. It's what our families did. You don't quit. You don't give up. You do what you have to do."

Celebrating the songwriters was the highlight for Lee. While David, Ed and Josh have been writing together for 15 years and had success

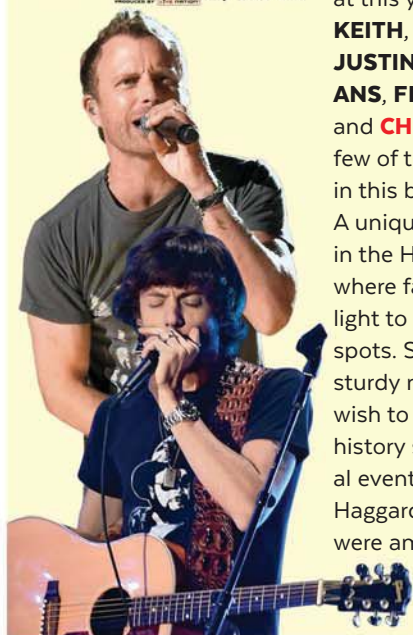


with other songs, "Drinking Class" was their first No. 1 hit together and David's first career No. 1.

"You guys are proof that hard work pays off and blesses the world," Lee said. "David, I am so excited for you, brother. This is such a great day. I'm so proud to be a part of your first No. 1."

The Hills Are Alive

JAMBOREE IN THE HILLS
July 16-19 2015



There's still time to make your plans for the oldest country music festival in the nation, **JAMBOREE IN THE HILLS**, taking place in Belmont, Ohio, July 16-19. And who's jamming at this year's Jamboree? **TOBY KEITH**, **DIERKS BENTLEY**, **JUSTIN MOORE**, **SARA EVANS**, **FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE** and **CHRIS JANSON** are just a few of the stars set to perform in this beautiful, bucolic setting. A unique feature of Jamboree in the Hills is the Redneck Run, where fans race by dawn's early light to get the prime viewing spots. So make sure to bring sturdy running shoes if you wish to participate. Plenty of history surrounds this annual event—Johnny Cash, Merle Haggard and Tammy Wynette were among those who played the very first Jamboree in the Hills in 1977.

BIG & RICH COLLABORATE WITH KORN SINGER

Bakersfield, Calif., is synonymous with some of the most influential country music ever recorded, between the Telecaster-driven twang of Buck Owens and the workman poetry of Merle Haggard. Bakersfield also happens to be the city that birthed **JONATHAN DAVIS**, frontman for the popular nu-metal band **KORN** ("Got the Life," "Freak on a Leash").

Jonathan's father, musician Rick Davis, actually played keyboards for Buck Owens for a stretch.

So maybe it shouldn't be a huge surprise that Jonathan recently updated his Instagram with a photo of **BIG & RICH**'s John Rich and Big Kenny in a recording studio. "Working with Big and Rich on a country music project #Bakersfieldsound," read the caption. No release date or further details were provided, but we suspect it'll be loud.



Country Landslide

How do you announce your 2016 presidential campaign in style? Unleash country-rap hybrid Colt Ford, of course. Former Texas governor Rick Perry used a personalized version of Colt's "Answer to



No One" to declare his presidential bid in June. Rick's new rallying cry features Colt singing such nuggets as *Shotgun toter / Republican voter / Rick Perry supporter / Let's protect our border / To heck with anyone who don't believe in the USA.*



SUMMER REFRESHER

Looking for light and tasty summertime fare? Try this salad, with dressing you can pour from a Mason jar.

Summer usually means eating light, and here's a recipe that's perfect for the season, Summertime Happiness Salad, from the Mason jar company. The salad features fresh strawberries with a robust and refreshing zing from grapefruit ginger dressing. And here's the best part. The dressing is easily stored in a Mason jar capped with the reCAP, which allows you to shake, pour and store salad dressing without spilling or making an oily mess. Find out more about this handy little cap at masonjars.com.

BOB PAXMAN

Summertime Happiness Salad

For Grapefruit Ginger Dressing:

¼ cup light oil (sunflower, canola or olive oil)

Juice from ½ ruby red grapefruit, freshly squeezed

½ tsp. salt

⅛ tsp. black pepper

½ to 1 tsp. minced fresh ginger

1 tsp. honey

Into a half-pint Mason jar, **ADD** all of the ingredients except for the grapefruit juice. **SQUEEZE** most of the juice from the half grapefruit through a sieve into the jar.

Screw on the reCAP pour cap. **SHAKE** vigorously for a couple minutes or until well incorporated.

SERVE as a salad dressing or use as a marinade for fish, chicken, beef or vegetables.

For Salad:

Prepare plates with a bed of baby spinach or your choice of fresh greens. **ADD** sliced strawberries, sunflower seeds or thinly sliced roasted almonds, thinly sliced shallot (optional) and feta cheese or small dollops of goat cheese.

SHAKE and **POUR** the grapefruit ginger dressing and enjoy.

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The Long & Short of It

The many manes of Miranda Lambert. We can't decide which is our favorite—long and straight, short and wavy or classic and up. Which one do you like best?

It's a woman's right to change her mind. And it's **MIRANDA LAMBERT**'s right to change her hair, which she does from time to time. But Ran doesn't just go from long to short and back again, she changes from smooth and straight to retro curls, from fishtail braid to up-swept chignon, from a center part to a side part. No matter how she wears her hair, she rocks the locks.

Thanks to great bone structure, impeccable makeup and a flair for fashion, Miranda pulls off a hodgepodge of hairdos depending on her dress and mood.



Miranda long & wavy by Ethan Miller/Getty Images; Miranda long & straight by Jason Merritt/Getty Images; Miranda updo (2) by Amy Harris/Corbis; Miranda short & wavy by Mike Stone/Corbis; Miranda short curls by John Russell/CMA

How'd Ya Get *That* Hair?

We went shopping at Ulta Beauty (ulta.com) and found a few tools of the trade to help get the looks that Miranda wears so well.

BLOW, ROLL and GO

Instyler Rotating Iron—Wet to Dry
Busy girls like Miranda can benefit from this dual-purpose styling aid that dries and styles your hair simultaneously. **\$99.94**



FLAT LINE

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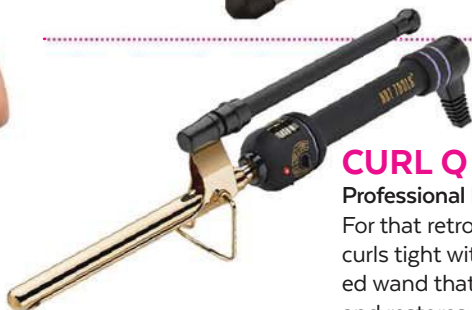
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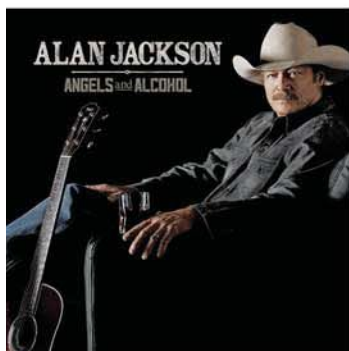
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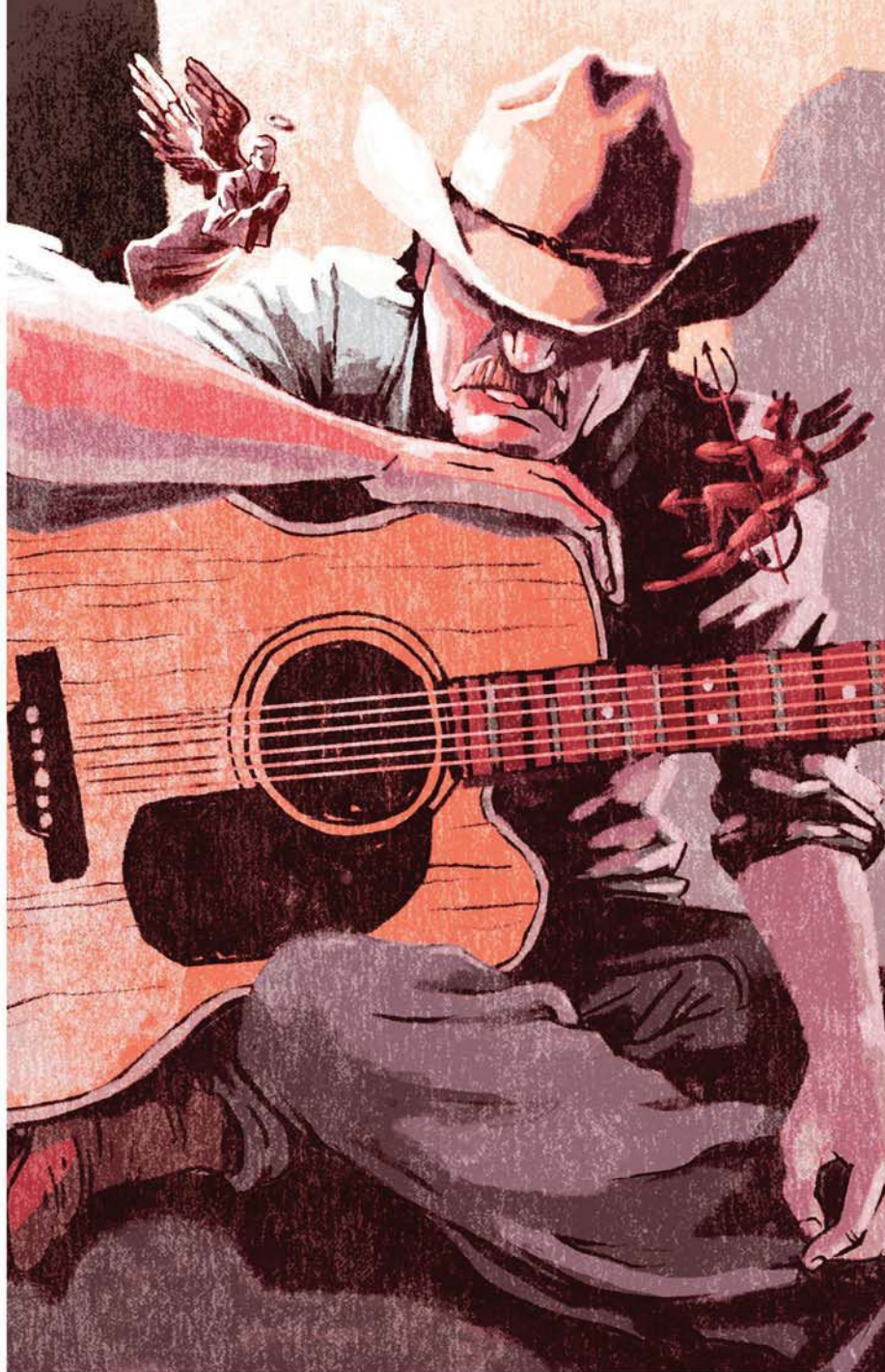
Alan Jackson *Angels and Alcohol*

EMI NASHVILLE/ACR RECORDS

A

Alan Jackson has had a busy year. In addition to his 25th anniversary Keepin' It Country Tour and his exhibit at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, Newnan, Georgia's favorite son is back in the saddle with a new album, *Angels and Alcohol*, his first studio record since 2013's *The Bluegrass Album*. The new 10-song offering, of which Alan wrote seven, comes 25 years after his debut album, *Here in the Real World*, and it couldn't have come soon enough. *Angels and Alcohol* is country music in its most basic and enjoyable form: simple, story-driven songs full of steel and fiddle sung by a real crooner.

Alan gets things kicked off with the warmly nostalgic opener, "You Can Always Come Home," which ebbs to the hook before the banjo and Alan's persuasive vocals reel you in. From there, Alan swings open the doors to the dance hall with sounds of ivory, fiddle and his rapid-fire, boot-scooting delivery of "You Never Know," before he slows it down with the sobering title track, "Angels and Alcohol," which sounds like something Keith Whitley would look down upon us and sing. Alan ratchets it back up a notch with the fun-loving



"Jim and Jack and Hank," a vividly humorous narrative about a man who—after his wife leaves him—finds comfort in his old friends and bids good riddance to her rubbish, including her *string bikinis* and *apple martinis*. AJ pulls the reins back once again on the pensive "When God Paints," and then caps the album with the go-live-in-the-moment "Mexico, Tequila and Me," a feel-good ditty that is just begging Jimmy Buffett to join him in concert to sing. The only thing missing from this album is a couple more songs.

LONG STORY SHORT: Alan is a self-proclaimed singer of simple songs, and we wouldn't want it any other way on *Angels and Alcohol*. **JIM CASEY**

Illustration by Drew Bardana; Jake by David McClister/Sweet Talk Publicity

JB & The Moonshine Band

Mixtape

LIGHT IT UP RECORDS/THIRTY TIGERS

B

They were “Moonshine” before moonshine became a thing. And they’ve been



mashing, mixing and blending straight-up country and rock ‘n’ roll with a dash of rebellion and a pinch of humor since their

inception six years ago. On their newest album, *Mixtape*, JB and The Moonshine Band showcase that impressive diversity—much like any respectable mixtape would—but they also push those extremes a little further than they ever have. The debut single, “Shotgun, Rifle, and a .45,” takes JB and the boys to a more rockin’ edge than any track from previous albums, while still featuring substantial shots of fiddle, banjo and steel.

TAMMY RAGUSA

Single



Jake Owen “Real Life”

RCA NASHVILLE

B+

What’s a guy like Jake Owen to do? He wants to show another side of himself than tank-top-wearing beach dude, but radio doesn’t want his serious ballads like “What We Ain’t Got.” So his latest, “Real Life,” is something entirely different: a half-spoken, half-sung number revolving around the highs and lows of regular folks and their less-than-picture-perfect lives. Musically, it recalls the hybridized late ‘90s rock and pop of Sugar Ray and Better Than Ezra, with a galloping, bass-heavy drumbeat and oodles of ear candy—vocal and instrumental—that surprises in almost every measure. As frank as the lyrics are about life being kind of messy for most people, there’s also a sense of joy and freedom in the way Jake sings them. It’s hard not to crack a real smile at that.

JON FREEMAN



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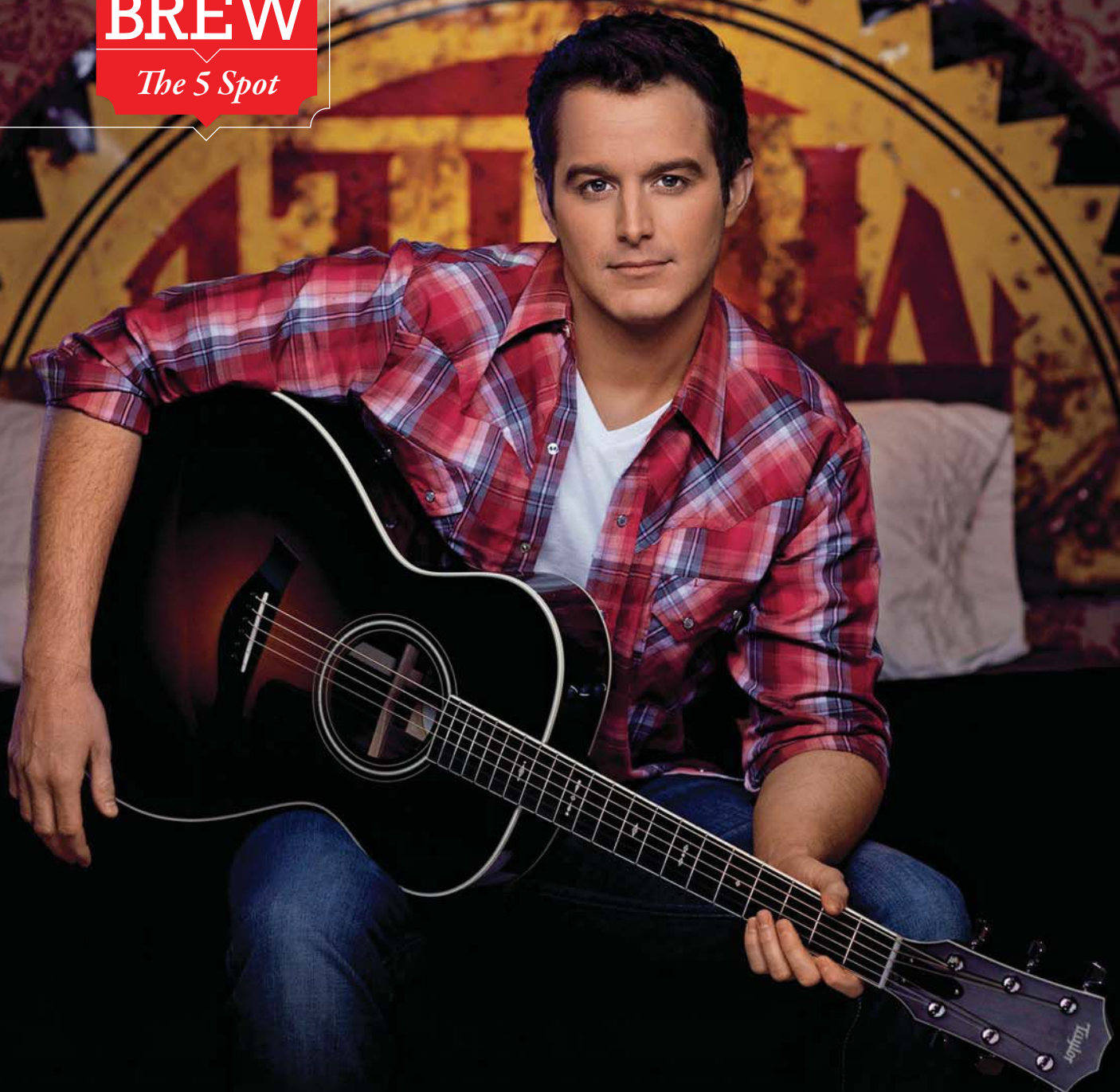
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5 SONGS THAT INFLUENCED EASTON CORBIN GROWING UP

- 1** **"Today I Started Loving You Again"**
MERLE HAGGARD
- 2** **"Sing Me Back Home"**
MERLE HAGGARD
- 3** **"Working Man's Blues"**
MERLE HAGGARD
- 4** **"He Stopped Loving Her Today"**
GEORGE JONES
- 5** **"Tell Lorrie I Love Her"**
KEITH WHITLEY





BRINGING THE HARVEST HOME

Young stars **DANIELLE BRADBERRY** and **CASADEE POPE** pitched in at **Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee** in Nashville to lend their support to the **Outnumber Hunger** campaign, which works to address hunger issues in local communities.

PHOTOS BY AIMEE STUBBS



(From left) Levi Hummon, Danielle, Cassadee and BMLG president Scott Borchetta lend a hand; (left) Cassadee sorts donations while (above left) Danielle unpacks.



Toby Keith

Good Times & Pick Up Lines Tour

OPENING ACTS:
CHRIS JANSON & ELI YOUNG BAND



Toby by Rick Diamond/Getty Images

JULY 10

Hartford, Conn.
Xfinity Theatre

JULY 11

Darien Center, N.Y.
Darien Lake
Performing
Arts Center

JULY 17

Raleigh, N.C.
Walnut Creek
Amphitheatre

JULY 19

Chillicothe, Ill.
Three Sisters Park at
Country Life Music
Festival

JULY 23

Monticello, Iowa
Jones County Fair
Grounds at Great
Jones County Fair

JULY 24

Cheyenne, Wyo.
Frontier Park at
Cheyenne Frontier
Days

JULY 25

Salt Lake City
USANA Amphitheatre

JULY 30

Atlanta
Aaron's Amphitheatre
at Lakewood

JULY 31

Pelham, Ala.
Oak Mountain
Amphitheatre

AUG. 1

Tampa, Fla.
MidFlorida Credit
Union Amphitheatre

AUG. 2

**West Palm
Beach, Fla.**
Cruzan
Amphitheatre

AUG. 7

Holmdel, N.J.
PNC Bank
Arts Center

AUG. 8

Bristow, Va.
Jiffy Lube Live

AUG. 9

Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio
Blossom Music Center

AUG. 14

Mansfield, Mass.
Xfinity Center

AUG. 21

Charlotte, N.C.
PNC Music Pavilion

AUG. 22

Virginia Beach, Va.
Farm Bureau Live at
Virginia Beach

SEPT. 5

**Maryland
Heights, Mo.**
Hollywood Casino
Amphitheatre

SEPT. 25

Cincinnati
Riverbend Music
Center

SEPT. 26

Burgettstown, Pa.
First Niagara
Pavilion

NOV. 7

Laughlin, Nev.
Laughlin Event
Center

NASH **NEXT**

NEW ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

HEY, MICKEY!

Newcomer
**MICKEY
GUYTON**
holds nothing
back when it
comes to her
country roots







The Mickey Guyton Club

Mickey Guyton wanted to be a country singer from an early age, and she's realizing that goal with her new EP.

STORY BY BOB PAXMAN

Mickey Guyton will never be accused of holding back. That's readily evident in conversation with the youthful Texas-born singer on a summer morning at the *Nash Country Weekly* offices. And it's quite refreshing, like a glass of iced tea in the sweltering heat. In an era where artists seem reluctant to tell you what they had for lunch, Mickey comfortably shares everything, right down to personal hygiene habits (see sidebar).

Right off the bat, Mickey whips out her cell phone and eagerly shows off a family photo. "These are all my cousins," she quickly points out. "And they're all country." One cousin, proudly sporting a cowboy hat, is particularly entrenched in the country lifestyle, she adds. "He's a real cowboy. He trains horses and all that. And of course, we are all Dallas Cowboys fans."

Interestingly enough, a different Texas sports team, baseball's Texas Rangers, provided part of the groundwork for Mickey's ultimate ambition—to sing country songs for a living. In the early 1990s, her family was living in Waco, Texas. Mickey's church group had the opportunity to attend a Rangers game in Arlington, coincidentally where Mickey was born. It wasn't the game itself, but the performance beforehand that shaped her life decision.

"We were all the way up in the nosebleed section," Mickey begins. "LeAnn Rimes sang the national anthem before the game and that's where it all started for me. She was about 10 years old and I was about 8 or 9. When I saw LeAnn perform in front of all those people, that gave me the motivation to become a singer because we were so close in age. I thought if she could do it, then I could, too."

Fast-forward a few years and Mickey, who turned 32 this past June 17, now appears on her way to realizing her adolescent ambition. She recently released her self-titled EP, which includes her current single, the fiery kiss-off song “Better Than You Left Me.” Impressed by her big voice and confident way with a country tune, the Grand Ole Opry has come calling several times. This summer, you’ll find Mickey opening for Brad Paisley on his Crushin’ It World Tour. On top of all that, she’s putting together a full-length album for future release.

There’s already a considerable buzz swirling around her, mostly due to her emotion-packed delivery of “Better Than You Left Me,” which Mickey wrote with top songwriters Jennifer Hanson and Jenn Schott. It’s a self-revelatory confessional belted out with power and poignancy, based on real-life circumstance.

“Everything in that song happened,” Mickey says with a downward glance. “I was in a really bad relationship. At first, I thought it was really great, but looking back I realized that he just took and took.” One could also add “shallowness” to the young man’s string of personal shortcomings. “When I had none of this going on,” Mickey continues, “he wanted nothing to do with me. Then, when all of this started to happen, he wanted everything. He was so sure he wanted to be with me and all that,” she adds, her voice tinged with a hint of sarcasm. “By the time he decided he wanted to be with me, I had moved on.”

Mickey brought the entire scenario to her co-writers, who saw some strong song possibilities. “It was my very first co-writing session,” Mickey recalls. “I went in there and I told them literally from start to finish the life story of this guy. Jennifer Hanson actually said the exact words, ‘You’re better than he left you.’ And we just went from there. We wrote the song in about 30 minutes.”

The guy, of course, was gone from her life, but part of the damage was still very much intact. “It wasn’t until I sang



(From left) Jana Kramer, Kelsea Ballerini, RaeLynn, Mickey, Leslie Fram, Maddie Marlow and Tae Dye at the 2014 CMT Next Women of Country showcase; (opposite top) Mickey performs at the Grand Ole Opry in 2015.

MICKEY'S PLAYLIST

**Eight songs that
Mickey Guyton just
can't stop listening to.**

“Fly”

Maddie & Tae

**“Love Me Like
You Mean It”**

Kelsea Ballerini

“For a Boy”

RaeLynn

“Bad Blood”

Taylor Swift

“Traveller”

Chris Stapleton

“Little Red Wagon”

Miranda Lambert

“Should’ve Been Us”

Tori Kelly

**Pretty much anything
by Beyoncé**



the demo that I realized how powerful the song was,” Mickey says, managing a smile. “I started crying when I was singing it. I guess we all have that one person who just wrecked our souls.”

Happily, she’s wiped those tears from the rear-view mirror. “I’m in a relationship now,” she says, a beam-

ing smile telling all you need to know. “He’s really understanding about my business and my schedule. He is a lawyer, so we’re both very busy, and I think that makes it easier for both of us.”

The schedule is about to grow ever busier with the summer leg of Brad’s tour, which actually extends into early



Mickey performs onstage with Brad Paisley at the Hollywood Bowl in LA; (right) Mickey with her mom and dad.

October. On many shows, Mickey will join Brad for a duet on Brad's 2004 hit with Alison Krauss, "Whiskey Lullaby," with Mickey taking on Alison's vocal portion. Mickey actually toured with Brad earlier in the year and received some hugely valuable lessons from watching the country superstar in ac-

Hi-Five!

Mickey shares five things you don't know about her . . . until now.

- 1 "I have a major sweet tooth. I could eat sweets breakfast, lunch and dinner. But I don't like sweetened cereal, which is kind of crazy."
- 2 "I usually have to fall asleep with the TV on."
- 3 "OK, this is a really weird one. I wet the bed as a little kid, so my mom would make me use the bathroom before I went to bed. And now, I still go to the bathroom before I get in bed. I cannot break that habit. I'm a grown woman, for goodness' sake."
- 4 "I get car sick, or, more accurately, bus sick. The motion does it to me."
- 5 "I have a mild obsession with the British culture. The history, the way they talk—it's all fascinating."



tion, both on and off the stage. "I'm an observer," Mickey confides, "so I have watched him pretty closely. He's truly passionate and has a vision for what he wants to do. It's really cool to see him work and see how his team works. I've learned a lot from that." She's also tucked away some lessons

in human interaction. "Brad clearly treats everyone on the tour really well," Mickey explains. "He told me one time that when he first started, he went on a tour with other artists and they treated him like crap. He said that if he ever got to that level, he would be nice to the other acts. So one day, I hope I can do that for somebody."

Only thing she's yet to experience—one of Brad's famous pranks. "He is so known for pulling pranks, but I haven't gotten one yet," Mickey says, smiling with a notable touch of trepidation mixed in. "But I know it's coming. I'm nervous just thinking about it."

No such angst, though, in facing the obvious challenges that lie in front of her. She's well aware of the difficulties women, much less one of African-American heritage, face in today's male-dominated radio market. The discrepancy in airplay between men and women came to a rather loud crescendo recently when a radio consultant essentially admitted that stations are advised not to play female artists back-to-back.

"What we can do is encourage each other," Mickey says. "We have a nice little support group going with Kelsea [Ballerini], Maddie & Tae and some of the others. We have all become friends. Let's open up those gates, girls!"

As far as her own career, Mickey assures that country is her go-to genre, not her fallback one. She's not a pop singer trying to "go country," to paraphrase Alan Jackson somewhat. "I am one hundred percent country," Mickey declares. "I'm a very emotional person, and I have to feel the emotions of a song before I can sing it. I think I can relate to anyone because other people are going through these same emotions as well. Being a country singer is all I've wanted to do since I was a little girl."

And to think that it all started with a baseball game and LeAnn Rimes. "I've always wanted to thank LeAnn," Mickey says, flashing a wide grin. "We tweet each other now and then. I hope to get to meet her one day." And when that moment finally comes to life, you can bet she'll share it with the world. **N**

RAINEY'S SEASON

Follow newcomer **RAINEY QUALLEY** through her first CMA Music Festival experience as she tries to make a name for herself.

STORY BY TAMMY RAGUSA • PHOTOS BY TYLER ANDREWS

CMA MUSIC FESTIVAL IS well under way when we meet up with country newcomer Rainey Qualley on Friday, June 12, at Music Row—area studio The Tracking Room. It's actually the Asheville, N.C., native's second day of Music Fest, but her first time attending the annual celebration of country music, and she's eager to make a lasting impression.

It's 10:30 a.m., which is well before most singers' voices are warmed up, but this particularly hot and humid week doesn't give artists much choice. Appearances and performances start as early as 9 a.m., and while Rainey, 25, has actually already done a couple of satellite TV shots this morning, her voice isn't ready to sing for the room full of radio station personnel in town conducting interviews. She excuses herself to step outside and run through a few vocal exercises. And while warm-ups can seem odd to some, in the din of cranes,

trucks and jackhammers raising new construction nearby, Rainey's voice tolls out clearly like a chapel bell.

Despite the extra hours that the artists put in the week of Music Fest, singing, signing, meet-and-greeting, Rainey looks no worse for the wear. "I feel better today," she tells us. "I fell asleep at about 9 last night and I had to be up at 5." She's a natural beauty, though. She dabs a bit of tinted lip balm on her lips, then plops down on the floor, legs curled under her, chatting and laughing with her band, occasionally checking her cell phone, until the morning's hostess, Sharla McCoy, gives her the signal that it's time to start.

There is no visible hint of nerves as Rainey steps up to the microphone before what could be her most critical audience—country radio. She smiles warmly as Sharla poses different questions and she laughs at herself as she offers answers, still growing

used to the interview process. Singing is her comfort zone and she's ready to get to it. In fact, she waves off a traditional sound check and she and her band throw themselves into "Watered Down." Her voice is so big, yet so controlled, it fills the studio, and a glance around the room reveals those often intimidating radio jocks sitting, mouths gaping open, eyes wide, surprised at what they hear. When she finishes, they offer up more than just polite clapping. The room erupts in enthusiastic applause, some whooping their praise.

After she finishes her allotted four songs, which includes her new single, "Me and Johnny Cash," Sharla invites her to do one more and the station staffers are utterly charmed as Rainey offers a sweetly flirtatious version of her country-as-heck debut single, "Turn Me On Like the Radio." When she soars into the chorus, you can hear strains of Patsy Cline in her full, gutsy vocals.

Following her performance, Rainey visits with the attendees before grabbing a quick bite to eat, then her entourage heads downtown, where she'll perform for fans inside Music City Center. On the ride down, we chat about Bonnaroo, *Musica* (the statue of nude dancers on Music Row) and the construction happening in Nashville. The conversation is peppered with Rainey's distinctive voice as she sings along with the radio.

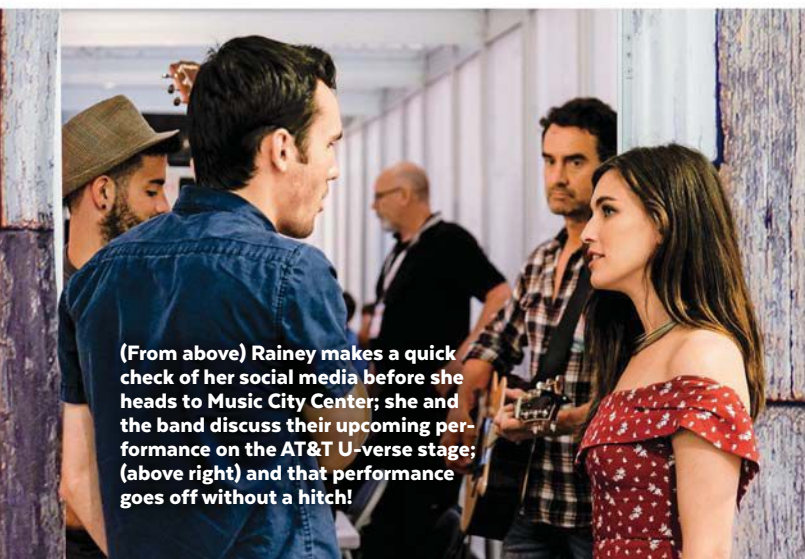
There is more time to chat once we arrive at the site of Music Fest's



After performing songs from her new EP, *Turn Down the Lights*, Rainey spends a little time at Nashville's The Tracking Room with her new friends at country radio.







(From above) Rainey makes a quick check of her social media before she heads to Music City Center; she and the band discuss their upcoming performance on the AT&T U-verse stage; (above right) and that performance goes off without a hitch!



AT&T U-verse Fan Fair X, so we question her about her calm demeanor. “I get nervous singing in front of people I know,” she reveals. She pauses, then thoughtfully says, “I feel like I’m a good singer. I love singing the national anthem because I feel like I’m good at it. I’m not really competitive, but I think I’m a pretty good singer.” Her comments aren’t arrogant, they’re more confident. And quite accurate. There’s a unique huskiness to the petite brunette’s voice, and a range and control that rivals big voices like Carrie Underwood’s and Martina McBride’s. And her songwriting is mature beyond her years.

Glancing around the greenroom, the holding tank for artists and bands, Rainey is just a normal girl, joking with her band, manager, publicist and label staff. She is a mix of poise, grace and confidence with a generous dose of youthful energy and good-natured, well, goofiness. She is enchanting to everyone within earshot, telling tales of the road and discussing *Game of Thrones*. She frequently looks at her cell phone to check her social media messages. “I love interacting with fans,” she says, smiling. “They send me videos of themselves singing my songs. I love that.”

One final check of the phone and a fresh dab of lip gloss and we’re off to

the AT&T U-verse stage for Rainey’s next performance. Lauren Alaina is finishing up as we arrive, so Rainey and her band go behind the stage to get ready for their show. We stand back a bit, giving them the space they need to get their game faces on, and as we see hands all in for the “go” sign, we move closer to watch. The crowd is sparse at first—as it always is between shows as fans break to get a cold drink or do some quick shopping—but as she begins to sing, the corral designated for this stage begins to fill. Heads are bobbing, toes are tapping and hips are swaying. When she breaks into “Me and Johnny Cash,” a fair number of fists are in



Even without her band, Rainey is in her comfort zone when AT&T asks her to sing songs from her EP; (bottom left) a little Q&A with the folks from Pandora; (below) Rainey meets with fans in the Roper booth and with Opry legend Jeannie Seely (bottom middle) in the greenroom.



the air pumping along to the chorus. As she finishes, a line of autograph seekers begins to wrap around the stage. But Rainey isn't one to just sign a photo or pose for a photo. She chats with every new fan who comes through the line before being whisked off for an interview with AT&T.

Upstairs, in a room that overlooks the exhibit hall in Music City Center, things accelerate to an almost frenetic pace as our ingénue is fussed over by a glam squad, then put in front of a camera while a faceless voice behind a monitor fires questions at her and a boom mic hovers over her head. She remains poised, but we see the first glimpses of nervous fidgeting

from her until the anonymous interviewer asks her to sing. She breathes an audible sigh of relief and breaks into a chorus of "Me and Johnny Cash," and we have the pleasure of watching everyone in the room stop and turn to watch, almost in disbelief, at the power in her voice.

There is little time to talk as Rainey dashes to another interview with Pandora, then heads back to the exhibit hall. She checks her phone and lip gloss and recaps her experience so far. "It's been crazy," she says, laughing. "I've been getting up every morning at 5 a.m., but I love meeting the fans." As we maneuver our way to the Roper booth, we hear

a voice yell, "Rainey Qualley!" She smiles broadly and steps over for a quick hug and hello with the person who spotted her. As her team hurries her to her next stop, Rainey's eyes sparkle with excitement. "This time last year I was moving to Nashville," she says. "I told myself I'd be playing here this year." She giggles as melodically as she sings before dropping her purse behind the signing table.

As we stand watching Rainey and a fan do an impromptu acoustic duet of Little Big Town's "Girl Crush," behind us someone whispers, "Who is that?"

And we can't help but think that next year, they'll know. **NCW**

THE FAN ZONE

CMA Music Fest provided the opportunity to get up close and personal with two of our favorite stars at their fan club parties.

Scotty performed on the Rocketown stage before his meet-and-greet with fans.

SCOTTY MCCREERY ROCKETOWN | JUNE 10

There's one thing that Scotty McCreery loves, and that's treating his fans to something a little different during CMA Music Festival. His stripped-down acoustic performance for his fan club party at Rocketown included several fan favorites, but Scotty delivered something not even he expected to happen. He shot a text to fellow *American Idol* contestant and

good friend Lauren Alaina before the party, and she showed up to surprise the audience with a duet of Randy Travis' "I Told You So."

"We see a lot of these fans multiple times throughout the year at different shows," says Scotty. "When we see them on the road, we can only put on a 'normal' show and spend just a couple of seconds with them in the meet-and-greet because we have other things going on, so days like today, it's more of a personal giveback to them. It's a fun day for the fans and for me."



After her show at the Wildhorse Saloon, Lindsay met two of her biggest fans.

LINDSAY ELL WILDHORSE SALOON | JUNE 11

After opening for The Band Perry on their *We Are Pioneers* World Tour in 2014 and taking part in CMT's Next Women of Country showcase, 26-year-old Lindsay Ell proved that she is a talented singer/songwriter/musician. However, after attending her packed fan club party at the Wildhorse Saloon on June 11, we learned that Lindsay is also a talented painter. After her hour-long performance and fan meet-and-greet session, Lindsay auctioned off a few pieces of her artwork to benefit St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

"I love staying busy—playing guitar, writing, singing," says Lindsay. "I'm not much of an artist, I know where my strengths are, but I can paint a little bit, and I decided to paint a few guitars for the fan club party and put them at the merch table for a silent auction to benefit St. Jude's. I love St. Jude's so much, so anything I can do to give back to them, I will in a heartbeat. This whole fan club party was an amazing experience. It makes me feel a sense of gratitude to be lucky enough to do this for a living."



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HOUSE PARTY

Sam Hunt, RaeLynn and The Shires help Nash Country Weekly throw an epic bash to benefit Musicians On Call.



TO HELP GET THE 2015 CMA Music Festival off on the right foot, Sam Hunt, RaeLynn and UK-based band The Shires performed at the Country Weekly Kick-Off Party Powered by NASH on June 9 at Nashville's Cannery Ballroom.

The sold-out event was filled with plenty of music, laughter and memories, and it was all for a great cause. The party raised a record-high \$40,274 for **MUSICIANS ON CALL**, an organization that brings music to the bedsides of hospital patients. Special thanks go out to sponsors **RDIO**,

DURANGO and **ROPER**, who made it possible, as well as NASH-FM personalities Elaina Smith and Erika Grace Powell, who hosted the event.

Red-hot singer/songwriter Sam Hunt, serving as the night's headliner, helped the show sell out in only 10 minutes. Not bad for a guy who just 12 months prior was playing the free entertainment stages scattered throughout Lower Broadway in Nashville at the 2014 CMA Music Festival.

"It's cool to be here," Sam told *Nash Country Weekly*. "One year ago, we put

out our first single and played our first series of shows during CMA Fest. We were still really new. Fortunately, they gave us the opportunity to play, because we were just coming out. I had a blast hanging out that whole week. But this year is completely different!

"I hoped that the music would be successful," he continued. "I didn't know what that really meant in terms of lifestyle and what was going to be coming our way. It's been really cool watching it grow. I love being able to celebrate it with the guys in the band,

Lisa, Jeff, Raelynn, Sam and Pete by Curtis Hillman; all other photos by Arnie Stubbs



(Left) The Shires kicked things off; (right, from left) NCW editor in chief Lisa Konicki and publisher Jeff Meltesen with RaeLynn, Sam Hunt and Musicians On Call president Pete Griffin; (below) hosts Elaina Smith (left) and Erika Grace Powell; (below right) RaeLynn sparkled; (bottom) a packed crowd awaits Sam's performance, which did not disappoint (far left).



my management and all my people who have also helped to get us here."

The opportunity for RaeLynn to be part of the event was something she immediately agreed to for many reasons. "First of all, I love you guys at *Nash Country Weekly*, and I love Sam Hunt," RaeLynn gushed backstage in her dressing room before taking the stage. "I mean, who wouldn't want to kick off CMA Music Fest in this way? This is going to be fun. I am so excited to be here!"

Getting the music portion of the

night started was new duo The Shires, followed by the lovely RaeLynn, who did her part in keeping the crowd fueled. In addition to performing her own hits, such as "God Made Girls" and "For a Boy," she also treated the room to her sultry rendition of the Pistol Anies' "Hell on Heels," which she initially performed during her blind auditions on NBC's *The Voice*.

During Sam's set, he took the crowd through many of the fan favorites found on his debut album, *Montevallo*, including "Break Up in a

Small Town," "Speakers," "Ex to See" and "Single for the Summer," as well as his chart-topping hits "Leave the Night On" and "Take Your Time," plus his latest single, "House Party." In addition to his own hits, Sam also performed Keith Urban's "Cop Car" and Billy Currington's "We Are Tonight," which he helped write.

It was the biggest and best kick-off party yet, and a fitting way to ring in the magazine's next chapter as *Nash Country Weekly*.

ALANNA CONAWAY

FIELD of DREAMS

The biggest and brightest stars in country music came out at night to shine at Nashville's LP Field during CMA Music Festival.



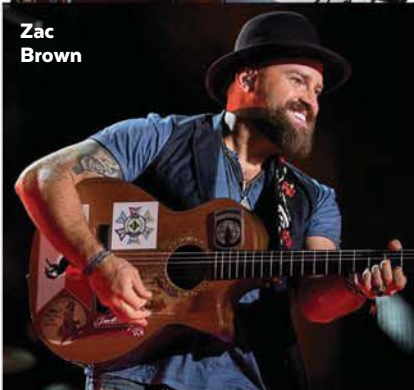
Brett
Eldredge



Lady
Antebellum



Alan
Jackson



Zac
Brown



Brad
Paisley



Lee
Brice



Thomas
Rhett



Wynonna



Maddie
& Tae



The Band Perry



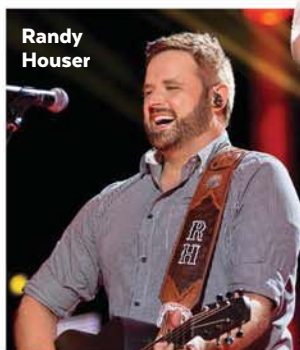
Carrie Underwood



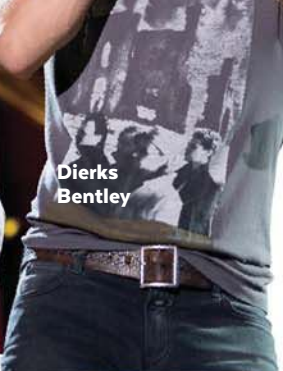
Luke Bryan



Florida Georgia Line



Randy Houser



Dierks Bentley



Jason Aldean



Sam Hunt



Little Big Town with The Oak Ridge Boys



Cole Swindell



Keith Urban (left) with Eric Church

◻ THE ◻ MACHINE

*With the tools of the trade,
DARIUS RUCKER has forged
himself into one of country
music's rare talents.*



PHOTOGRAPHED AT RECORDING
STUDIO THE FACILITY NASHVILLE
BY MARK HILL

TO CALL DARIUS RUCKER A SPORTS “FAN” is a bit of an understatement. An unabridged “fanatic” is probably more befitting. There’s a 150-inch television in his man cave in Charleston, S.C., that serves as high-definition proof of his passion for sporting contests. When he’s not tuning in to watch the NFL’s Miami Dolphins (you may remember, they make him cry), he’s keeping up with the NBA’s Dallas Mavericks and MLB’s Cincinnati Reds. In fact, as a lad growing up during the ’70s—and still to this day—Darius could sound off the starting lineup of Cincinnati’s Big Red Machine, the nickname given to the Reds’ teams that dominated the National League from 1970 to 1976 and won two World Series.



DARIUS RUCKER CONTINUED

On a sweltering June Saturday during Nashville's CMA Music Fest, Darius is happy to reminisce about his favorite boys of summer as long as it means a spot in the shade. It's a brief reprieve from his frenetic week-long schedule, which included his annual benefit concert and golf tournament (see sidebar) and performances at the CMT Music Awards, CMA Fest HGTV Lodge, Grand Ole Opry and LP Field, as well as a fan Q&A, media requirements and a *Nash Country Weekly* photo shoot. And this week comes smack-dab in the middle of his 30-plus-date headlining Southern Style Tour, which he set out on in support of his recent *Billboard* No. 1 album, *Southern Style*.

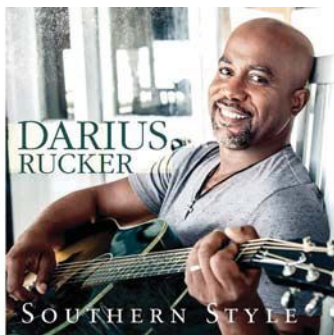
Darius has been running hard this week, to say the least, but Darius has been running hard since his foray into country music in 2008, and even before that, when he burst onto the scene as the front-man of Hootie & the Blowfish in 1994. That's more than 20 years of machinelike work, and while there

may be a little more gray in his goatee now, the 49-year-old isn't showing any signs of slowing down.

Between sips of bottled water and handfuls of nonperformance-enhancing Skittles, Darius' dark eyes light up as he talks about those Big Red Machine teams that were minted with future Hall of Famers like Joe Morgan, Johnny Bench and Tony Perez, not to mention Pete Rose and a host of other all-stars, like Ken Griffey Sr. and George Foster.

Darius' favorite player was work-

horse Dave Concepción, an all-star shortstop who played for the Reds for 19 seasons and kept the infield running like a well-oiled machine, but it was MVP second baseman Joe Morgan who led the Reds with an all-around arsenal of what purists like to call the "five tools" of baseball: hitting for power, hitting for average, speed, defense and arm strength. It's not much of a stretch to link those tools of the trade to Darius, one of country music's rare five-tool players. Like the numbers that hard-core



(Above) Cover art for Darius' new album; (right) Darius sings the national anthem at a Reds game in 2010; (below) Darius chats with NCW's deputy editor, Jim Casey.



Darius & Jim by Mark Hill; Darius Reds anthem photo by John Grieshop/Getty Images; golf tournament photos by Ed Rode

baseball fans are apt to crunch, metrics can help explain why Darius is at the top of the game.

HITTING FOR POWER

STAT | NO. 1 COUNTRY ALBUMS: 4 CONSECUTIVE

There was no shortage of naysaying when Darius made the “jump” to country music in 2008 with his debut album, *Learn to Live*, but those skeptics turned into believers when they heard the music. *Learn to Live* hit No. 1 on *Billboard*’s Top Country Albums chart and went on to sell more than 1 million units. Darius followed up his debut album with three more country albums that all reached No. 1. Four country albums, four consecutive No. 1s.

“It feels good to do that,” says Darius as a sly grin creeps across his face. “But it ain’t easy, man. You’ve got to go convince a lot of people that you are for real. Country fans know what’s real and what’s not. You’ve got to let them know you’re real, and that was big for me when I did my first radio tour, taking my record person to person and going, ‘Ya know, it would be great if you’d play it. If not, I understand, but I wanted to get it to you.’”

Darius obviously got the record in enough people’s hands—*Learn to Live* was certified as his first platinum album as a solo artist. When you factor in Darius’ work with Hootie & the Blowfish, he has No. 1 albums more than 20 years apart and in each of the last three decades. That’s power, brah.

HITTING FOR AVERAGE

STAT | NO. 1 COUNTRY SONGS: 538 AVERAGE

Of the 13 singles Darius has released to country radio since his debut album, including his current single, “Southern Style,” he has registered a combined seven No. 1 songs on the *Billboard* and Mediabase charts, including “Don’t Think I Don’t Think About It,” “It Won’t Be Like This for Long,” “Alright,” “Come Back Song,” “This,” “Wagon Wheel” and “Homegrown Honey.” That’s batting an amazing .538 when it comes to No. 1 songs.



The Darius Rucker and Friends sixth annual benefit concert and golf tournament during this year’s CMA Music Fest raised \$220,000 for St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital. This year’s earnings doubled last year’s effort, bringing the grand total to more than \$660,000 since the event’s inception in 2010. The all-star lineup at the Wildhorse Saloon featured performances from Darius, his current Southern Style tourmates Brett Eldredge, A Thousand Horses and the Brothers Osborne, as well as Little Big Town, Scotty McCreery and Steve Wariner. Brett and Scotty joined in on the celebrity golf tournament the following day, which also included Vince Gill, Cole Swindell, Dustin Lynch and many others.

“We didn’t expect to hit \$220,000, but it’s a special feeling knowing it’s all for St. Jude, which is such a great place to do anything for,” says Darius. “Every year the show gets bigger and bigger. We sell it out before we even announce who’s playing. The same thing with the golf tournament, it just keeps getting bigger and bigger. I’m already excited about doing it again next year.”





DARIUS RUCKER CONTINUED

"I'll take that average," Darius says, laughing as he ponders the calculation. "Country music is all about the song. If you have the right song, it will work and be successful. But country music has always been in me. If you listen to a bunch of the Hootie records and some of the songs I wrote, you can feel it in there. 'Let Her Cry' [from 1994's *Cracked Rear View*] is a perfect example. When I play that, I say it's the first country song I wrote, 'cause I really believe it's a country song. So when I came over to country I didn't feel like I was

doing anything different, I really didn't. I was just out there singing. The number ones just followed."

SPEED

STAT | YEARS PER ALBUM RELEASE: 1.6

Since 2008, Darius has released four country albums—*Learn to Live* (2008), *Charleston, SC 1966* (2010), *True Believers* (2013), *Southern Style* (2015)—and one holiday album, *Home for the Holidays* (2014). Five albums in eight years? That kind of 1.6-year-per-album output is hard to match. To put Darius' accomplishments into

LATE & GREAT

In 1994, Hootie & the Blowfish made their television debut on *Late Show With David Letterman*, playing their smash hit "Hold My Hand." In April 2015, more than 20 years after their debut, Darius and his Hootie bandmates reunited for one of Dave's final shows, again playing the breakout single that put them on the musical map.

"It was awesome to get the phone call from an icon like Letterman, calling you up and asking you to play one of his last weeks," says Darius. "I thought that was amazing, and we felt so honored about that. It was really a great night."



perspective, take a look at superstar Blake Shelton, who has a comparative output over the last eight years—four country albums, one holiday album—but only three of Blake’s country albums reached No. 1. Darius’ catalog is a testament to both quality and speed, proving he has mad wheels.

“I like to put records out, that’s the fun part,” Darius says, still tickled by the Hootiemetrics. “The funny thing to me, when Hootie started putting records out the only reason you went on tour was to advertise your record. Now, the only reason you make a record is to advertise your tour. It’s just totally changed, but you have to be willing to change with the times. It’s like *Southern Style*, which I think is the countriest record I’ve made. I’m trying to make those records that made me want to make country music. So we’re getting a little closer each time. I said when I started making this record, ‘Let’s not worry about radio or whatever, let’s just make a country record.’ And that’s what we did.”

DEFENSE

STAT | WRITING NO. 1 COUNTRY SONGS: .857 AVERAGE

Of Darius’ seven aforementioned No. 1 country songs, he has had a hand in writing six of them (“Wagon Wheel” is the exception). Darius’ songwriting chops and rhythm guitar skills are as solid as just about anyone else’s in the game, and his .857 average is proof positive. But it is definitely something he has had to work on, and it’s something he still practices to this day. He didn’t pick up a guitar until he was 18 years old, so while he got into the game late, he’s made up for lost time.

“I was a kid and thought about wanting to be a songwriter, but not being able to play the guitar as a kid, I just never did,” says Darius, as he picks up the Gibson guitar at his feet and begins to strum it softly. “When I started with Hootie and we were a cover band, it was one of those things where I was just like, ‘Let’s write our own songs,’ and I wrote ‘Let Her Cry’ and ‘Time’ and all that stuff. Writing and guitar are so important to me. I practice guitar constantly. I’m actually taking lessons right now so I continue to grow. I’ve got a buddy who teaches in Charleston, and I told him to just come make me a better guitar player. I’m still learning and just getting better with the theory and solos and everything.”

ARM STRENGTH

STAT | ALBUM RANGE: 4 GENRES

Darius’ deep, baritone voice is his most recognizable trait, and there’s no doubt it’s one of those rare God-given abilities that very few people are blessed with. It’s a strength that has allowed him to step outside the bounds of just one genre and showcase his range with albums in pop/rock, R&B, holiday and country. From his days fronting Hootie and winning two Grammys to his present-day country music career and Grammy win

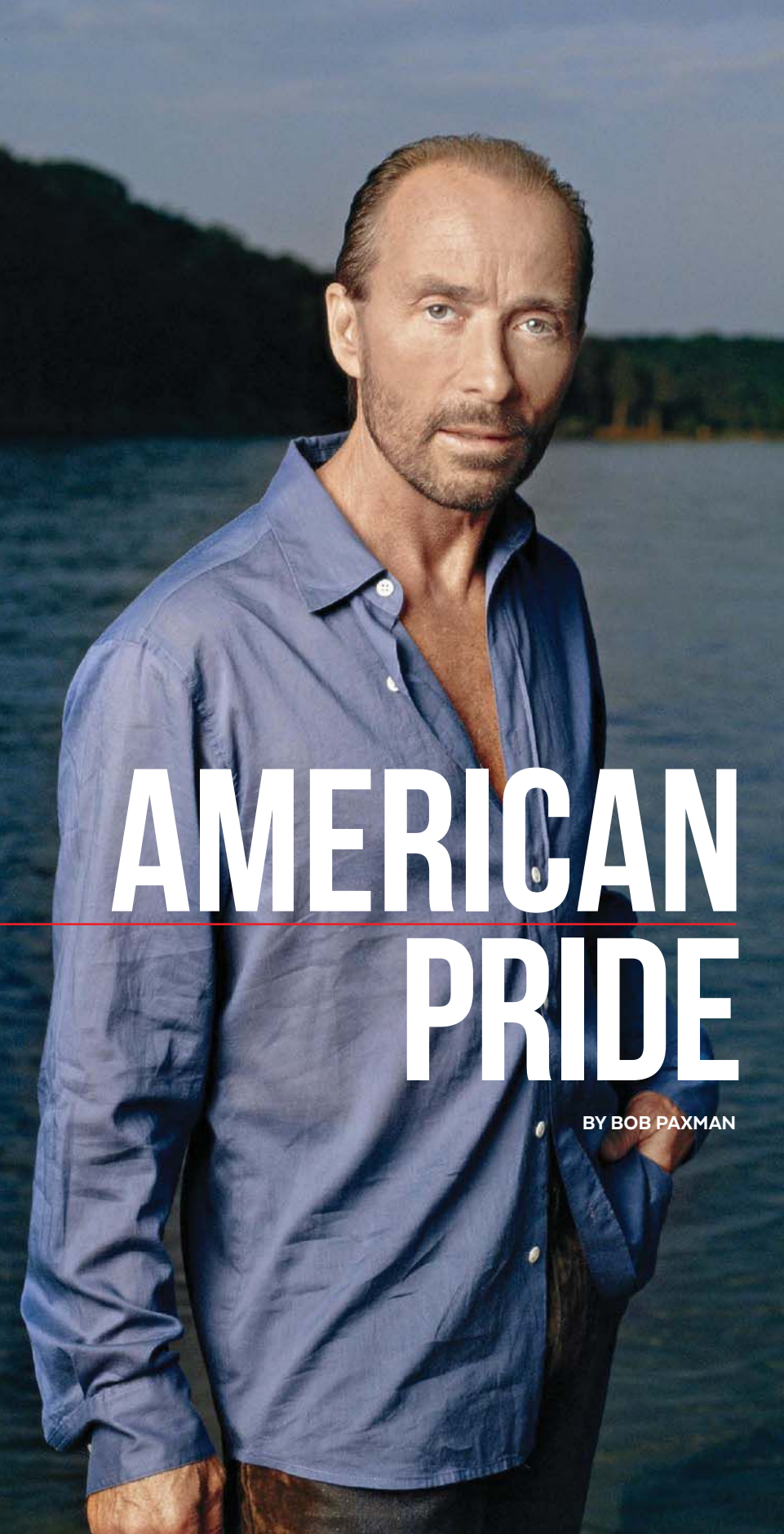
Darius performs at LP Field during Nashville’s CMA Music Fest in June 2015.



in 2014 for Best Country Solo Performance for “Wagon Wheel,” Darius’ recognizable voice has been an award-winning presence over the last 20-plus years.

“When I was 4, my mom said, ‘Boy, you can really sing,’” Darius says, doing his best matriarchal impression. “Now I look back and think it’s funny, but ever since I was 4, being a singer is all I ever said I wanted to do. I may have discovered my voice as a young kid, but church is where I discovered my love for music. I was always so moved in church. High school choirs and stuff like that, too. When I was 5 or 6, I discovered AM radio and realized there was more to music than the R&B records that we had. The whole world opened up to me and I started loving all kinds of music. And that just really took me to a whole new level and made me want to be where I am now.”

Where he is now is at the top of the game. **NCW**



AMERICAN PRIDE

BY BOB PAXMAN

*Lee Greenwood looks to encourage patriotism in young people with his latest book, **Proud to Be an American.***

Who knew that Lee Greenwood had a little Mickey Spillane in him? The energetic singer/songwriter lets that slip a bit when discussing his latest book, *Proud to Be an American*, at the *Nash Country Weekly* offices. Lee's book is aimed at children and parents, but he admits that writing for a more grown-up audience would also seem an enticing proposition.

"I probably would enjoy writing short stories and detective stories," Lee answers when asked if the fiction bug had ever bitten. "I have written both but never got them published. But I think if I really worked at it, there might be a chance. I find that I can be very creative when it comes to writing mystery. It's just that I don't always have the time. My schedule is so busy these days."

To that, he is definitely on point. Lee, the 1983 and 1984 Country Music Association winner for Male Vocalist of the Year, maintains a schedule that would exhaust folks much younger than 72, his current age. He tours regularly, serves as the national ambassador for the military organization Helping a Hero and keeps up his songwriting chops. In between all that activity, he finds enough spare time to write books.

Proud to Be an American, Lee's third book, plays off his 1984 anthem "God Bless the USA," which has become a veritable standard across all genres of music. "The idea is to encourage patriotism in chil-

photo courtesy Webster PR

dren,” Lee explains in his rapid-fire speaking tempo, which might remind you of the movie director Martin Scorsese. “We kind of illustrate the lyrics to ‘God Bless the USA.’ It follows along with the song. We show the geography of the United States and pinpoint certain places that are talked about in the song, like Detroit and Houston and the lakes of Minnesota. And there are some illustrations of just Americana-type things—parades, farmlands, a father fishing with his son.” *Proud to Be an American* includes a free download of “God Bless the USA,” which Lee rerecorded especially for the project.

The book hit stores and online retailers, fittingly enough, on Memorial Day weekend. Obviously, Lee’s hoping for a best-seller, but more than that, he’d like nothing better than for *Proud to Be an American* to engender some meaningful parent-child discussions. “A child might ask a question like, ‘Why is the flag red, white and blue?’ Or a parent could help a child understand what ‘patriotism’ means,” Lee says. He thinks back to the days when he and his wife, Kim, would read to their young sons, Parker and Dalton, who are now 16 and 20, respectively.

“We would read them these cute little stories that would help them learn words,” Lee recalls with a smile. “But when I was approached about this new book, we realized that we never had any patriotic books to read to them. Maybe this book will fill that gap for parents.” He adds that the book emphasizes the patriotic aspect. “The reason we called it *Proud to Be an American* and not *God Bless the USA* was to make it more across-the-board,” Lee says. “People wouldn’t shy away from it who may be of another religion or may not recognize God. The phrase ‘Proud to be an American’ is in the song, anyway, so it’s not really a stretch.”

Unbelievably, given the longevity and continuing popularity of the

song—Lee still gets requests to sing it at national holiday events and festivals—“God Bless the USA” never reached the No. 1 summit. But he had plenty that did hit the high-water mark, including “Somebody’s Gonna Love You,” “I Don’t Mind the Thorns (If You’re the Rose)” and others during the 1980s. Unlike most of his peers, Lee was in his 40s by the time he released those big hits. He didn’t even move to Nashville until his late 30s, a scenario that would be nearly unfathomable in today’s country world. Lee made the trek to Nashville in 1979 after years of honing his craft in the Las Vegas clubs as a singer and multi-instrumen-

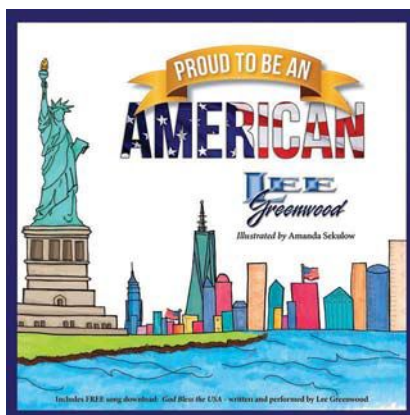
talist (he plays sax and keyboards, among others). About a year later, he joined a hefty roster of future superstar classmates, if you will, after signing with the MCA label.

“I was signed right around the same time as George Strait, The Oak Ridge Boys and Barbara Mandrell [who had switched labels],” Lee says. “We all worked pretty tough schedules back then. We had to turn in two albums a year, so that meant you were constantly in the studio whenever you were in town. And I toured heavily. I did every roadhouse and doghouse I could play,” he adds with a laugh. “Then, you were expected to write songs in between. I don’t know how we did it sometimes, but we got it done.”

And when Lee says he toured, he’s not blowing smoke. He hit the road like a greyhound and never stopped sprinting. “[Grand Ole Opry star] Ray Pillow, one of the guys who brought me to Nashville, told me that I’d get to know every country radio station and every disc jockey once I started touring,” Lee recalls. “I’m thinking, ‘There ain’t no way,’ but he was right. We were doing over 300 days a year and I did start to get familiar with some of the DJs and the stations.”

Safe to say that Lee has fairly well established himself through years of dedicated road work. He plans to release a new album sometime soon, a collection of pop and rock standards. “I went through a catalog and picked songs I liked,” Lee notes. “There’s the old Joe South song ‘Games People Play’ and a few others I’ve recorded so far. Those were the songs I cut my teeth on. We’re looking at later this year to release that.”

For now, his main focus centers on the new book. “I think it will have an across-the-board appeal,” Lee says in an enthusiastic tone. “My hope is that it will eventually get into the educational institutions across America, like school libraries. We’re just very excited to have this out.” **NCW**



PROUD TO BE AN AUTHOR

Writing books has turned into a successful side business for Lee Greenwood.

With the release of *Proud to be an American*, Lee Greenwood can now call himself the author of three books, all inspired by his anthemic tune “God Bless the USA.” Lee shared his thoughts on his first two efforts.

God Bless the USA: Biography of a Song (1993): “It was sort of a personal history but also a history of the United States over 50 years of my life. That book was done before I met my wife, Kim.”

Does God Still Bless the USA: A Plea for a Better America (2012): “That was a little more controversial. It asked the question, ‘Where is our country headed?’ We tried to depict the mire that we are in and how we get our feet out of it.”



ON TRACK

With a new team and new music, **Craig Campbell** has the wheels in motion for his best album yet.

IT'S ONE THING FOR an artist to survive a blow like the closing of his record label. It's quite another to do it with grace, especially when the artist is approaching his greatest success, but that's exactly what Craig Campbell did. When his Bigger Picture label home shuttered in spring 2014, Craig was in the middle of promoting "Keep Them Kisses Comin'." So beloved was the Lyons, Ga., native by his soon-to-be unemployed label staff and his friends at radio, the forward momentum of the single continued, eventually propelling it to Top 10 despite the label's closure.

A lesser man may have been bitter that a possible chart-topper didn't ascend farther, but not Craig. We have spoken to him several times since that fated day and he holds no grudges and has no regrets. He has since signed with Red Bow Records, has a management team, new publishing and has released "Tomorrow Tonight," the first single from his upcoming album. "It feels so good," he says softly. "I don't want to take anything away from my previous label. Those guys were fired up, too, and I think we did some awesome, awesome things given the resources we had, but it does feel good to know that I have a team that can get it done. And they're excited about it. So every piece of the puzzle is here."

Another new piece of the puzzle is producer Jeremy Stover, whom Craig credits with helping him "turn the corner." He explains, "Comparatively, if you listened to my first album and to a Blake Shelton song, Blake is super-big and overshadows my record. Don't get me wrong, I love my first record, but a lot of songs on radio were hitting harder with awesome drums and big bass guitars and just a little more energy. I said, 'I gotta do that and I think we can without sacrificing my integrity as a singer and as a lyricist.' And I feel like we



did it." That harder hit meant Craig had to reluctantly shake up his sound. "We consciously wanted to make the drums bigger, hit harder," he says. "Instrumentation-wise, we don't have any fiddle on this album. I had a fiddle player for a while, then we decided to not have fiddle on the road. When it comes to playing live, I want to be able to duplicate my record as closely as I can, so when you've got fiddle and they've got these great solos, it's weird to see another instrument play it, to me. So that was a change." The other change comes in the content, but there, he's bucking the trend.

Craig is unapologetic when he says,

THREE OF A KIND

Craig lists **TRAVIS TRITT**, **RANDY TRAVIS** and **CLINT BLACK** as influential musical forces during his early years growing up in Georgia.

"Honestly, I didn't want to sing anything that had the word 'tailgate' in it. I didn't want to go down those roads that seemed like there was a lot of that going on on the radio. But I also wanted to be able to tap into a group of listeners that would hear it and say, 'Wow, this is awesome. I want to download this.' So I was keeping all of that in mind, but at the same time, my core fans expect to hear certain stuff. My 'Family Man' fans, they need to hear those kinds of songs from me as well."

Although the album isn't completed, Craig knows that some of the songs he has recorded so far will take him into previously uncharted territory. "I think there was some subject matter I hadn't touched on yet," he says. "For lack of a better word, we're getting sexier on this album with some songs, and vulnerable from a guy's point of view. I don't think I'm going to totally alienate my fans, but at the same time, I think people are going to hear this and go, 'Wow, this is cool.'"

So far, so good. "Tomorrow Tonight" became a new personal best for Craig, with more than double the radio stations adding it to their playlists in its first week of release than any other single he has put out.

Maybe the music will be a little different, but the artist is still the same in his integrity and his commitment. "I've worked so hard to get here, and even though I've had some success, I haven't had any downslopes, I've had a slow climb the whole time. It has been scary at some points, and the idea of going back to singing demos and riding around in a van and trailer and playing honky-tonks is not that far away from me. I could be back doing that at any minute, so I'm very grateful for the opportunity I have in front of me. I'm not going to derail it."

TAMMY RAGUSA

JIM ED BROWN

1934–2015

The Hall of Fame member and Grand Ole Opry legend lived his life in harmony.

STORY BY BOB PAXMAN

Jim Ed Brown found success on three different levels of entertainment, a rarity for any artist. With his sisters Bonnie and Maxine, the rich-voiced singer from Arkansas formed the popular trio The Browns, which scored one of the biggest hits of the 1950s, “The Three Bells,” a 10-week No. 1 in 1959. As a solo artist, Jim Ed racked up a slew of Top 10 hits, including “Pop a Top”—later covered by Alan Jackson—“Morning,” “Southern Loving” and “Sometime Sunshine.” He produced some of his most acclaimed work with duet partner Helen Cornelius, topped by the 1976 No. 1 hit “I Don’t Want to Have to Marry You,” a song that spurred them to win the Country Music Association award for Vocal Duo of the Year in 1977.

Country music lost the multit talented Jim Ed on June 11, when he died from complications of cancer at age 81. This past March, he experienced the joy of hearing his name called as one of the newest members of the Country Music Hall of Fame, elected along with his singing sisters. About a week before his passing, Jim Ed was able to receive his commemorative medallion, given to all new Hall of Fame members, in a touching bedside ceremony attended by his friend Bill Anderson and other fellow stars.

During the memorial service for Jim Ed, held at Nashville’s Ryman Auditorium (see sidebar),

Grand Ole Opry general manager Pete Fisher eulogized the popular Opry member, warmly noting that “Jim Ed lived his life in harmony,” meaning in all phases of his life. “Harmony is a thread through the entirety of his legacy.”

Jim Ed understood the importance of living a harmonious existence from an early age. Born in tiny Sparkman, Ark., April 1, 1934, Jim Ed grew up listening to the Grand Ole Opry with his family over a battery-powered radio (the family home had no electricity). He was performing by the time he was a teenager until around 1954, when he and sister Maxine formed a duo and signed a record contract. Their lone single release, “Looking Back to See,” billed under the name of Jim Edward & Maxine Brown, peaked at the No. 8 spot. With the addition of Bonnie in 1955, The Browns, as they were now called, represented family harmony at its purest, blending their voices into an amiable style

embraced by country and pop fans alike. “It was sibling harmony, a sound that was very pleasing,” Jim Ed noted in an interview with the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. “It couldn’t be imitated.” The trio began performing on the Louisiana Hayride radio show and picked up plenty of bookings for road shows.

Traveling with two women in tow presented its share of challenges, bridging the arduous and the humorous, for Jim Ed. He

The Browns, Jim Ed, Bonnie (Left) and Maxine in a 1950s publicity photo



Jim Ed was one
of country's
most versatile
and popular
stars.



Remembering Jim Ed

Appropriately, the sounds of “When They Ring Those Golden Bells” by The Browns echoed throughout the Ryman Auditorium as family and friends arrived for Jim Ed Brown’s memorial service. Photos of Jim Ed, along with stage costumes and video clips from Jim Ed’s career, adorned the Ryman stage. Seated toward the front of the lower level of the historic Ryman, often called the “Mother Church of Country Music,” were such luminaries as Garth Brooks and wife Trisha Yearwood, Lee Greenwood, T.G. Sheppard and others who came to pay their final respects to the longtime Grand Ole Opry star.

Jim Ed was remembered both in words and in song, with Grand Ole Opry general manager Pete Fisher being the first to speak. Pete warmly recalled Jim Ed’s generosity, especially toward young artists who were making their Opry debuts. “When new performers would arrive, he would reach out to them,” Pete said. “He made them feel at home.”

The Oak Ridge Boys were the first act to perform at the service, also a fitting touch. The Oaks joined Jim Ed and The

Browns, along with guitarist Grady Martin, as new inductees to the Country Music Hall of Fame this year. “It’s an honor to be here,” said Oaks tenor vocalist Joe Bonsall before the quartet lit into an a cappella rendition of the gospel tune “Life Is Like a Mountain Railroad,” also known as “Life’s Railway to Heaven.”

Also on hand to speak were Opry star Jeannie Seely, who shared memories of Jim Ed on the family’s behalf, and Brenda Lee, who recalled making the formal announcement of Jim Ed’s election to the Country Music Hall of Fame earlier this year.

Additional stars graced the Ryman stage with performances in Jim Ed’s honor, including Crystal Gayle singing her hit “When I Dream” and an emotional Craig Morgan delivering the standard “Amazing Grace.” Vince Gill reprised his original song “Threaten Me With Heaven,” while Larry Gatlin and The Gatlin Brothers, bluegrass great Rhonda Vincent and gospel trio The Isaacs also performed. Lady Antebellum closed out the service with their song “Never Alone.”

As attendees slowly filed out of the Ryman, onstage monitors displayed photos and video clips of Jim Ed to the tune of “It’s a Good Life,” a cut from Jim Ed’s final album, *In Style Again*. A fitting end to a beautiful ceremony.



Jim Ed's memorial featured The Oak Ridge Boys (above) and Vince Gill (above right).





(Clockwise from above) Jim Ed and wife Becky; Jim Ed plays one of his final shows on the Grand Ole Opry stage; his last album; with good friend T.G. Sheppard and performing with duet partner Helen Cornelius.



JIM ED BROWN CONTINUED

recalled the early days of touring, before state-of-the-art tour buses were the norm, in a 1997 interview with *Country Weekly*. Traveling was done by car, regardless of the distance, for reasons Jim Ed clearly explained.

"No one had buses," he said, "because all the highways were two-lane roads and they couldn't handle big buses." When Bonnie joined Jim Ed and Maxine, the need for a family touring car became top priority. Jim Ed had saved enough to buy a Cadillac, the luxury automobile of the era. "I paid \$5,400 for it, and the best thing was it had air conditioning. We didn't even have that in the house," he recalled with one of his hearty laughs.

Still, even in the cool seats of luxury, traveling by car could test the most tolerant of souls. "You had a lot of long rides and not too many restaurants," Jim Ed remembered. "You didn't have fast-food places everywhere you

went, like they do now. Sometimes, you barely had time to check in to the hotel and get a bath and clean up. The girls didn't like that too much."

But the trio survived through the latter part of the 1960s, with Jim Ed occasionally recording as a solo act. Jim Ed became a member of the Grand Ole Opry in 1963 and enjoyed the majority of his solo hits once The Browns disbanded in 1967.

Jim Ed's smooth, well-modulated voice and congenial nature made him a natural for television. He parlayed his singing fame into several TV hosting slots over the years, beginning with the syndicated *Nashville on the Road* in 1975. Jim Ed also hosted The Nashville Network shows *You Can Be a Star*, a forerunner to *American Idol*, and *Going Our Way*, a travel program that co-starred his wife, Becky. He became familiar to many TV viewers as the celebrity spokesperson for Dollar General stores. On the radio side, Jim Ed was

the authoritative voice behind the *Country Music Greats Radio Show*, devoted to the legends of the genre.

Jim Ed's recording career lasted only through the early 1980s, but he hardly remained idle. He concentrated his efforts on touring and performing on the Grand Ole Opry, where he became a mainstay of the cast.

In 2014, Jim Ed announced that he had been diagnosed with lung cancer, forcing him to cancel shows to undergo treatment. The diagnosis came months before the release of Jim Ed's final work, the album *In Style Again*, his first collection of original material in more than 30 years.

On June 11, Jim Ed ultimately lost his battle with cancer. Fellow entertainer T.G. Sheppard likely summed up the thoughts of many when he posted this message on Twitter: "I have just lost a great friend and the world has lost a great voice." A voice, he might have added, that was always in harmony. **NCW**

TOP 20 BILLBOARD ALBUMS

TW	LW	TITLE / ARTIST
1	—	NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL COUNTRY, VOLUME 8 • VARIOUS ARTISTS
2	2	JEKYLL + HYDE ZAC BROWN BAND
3	—	SOUTHERNALITY A THOUSAND HORSES
4	4	MONTEVALLO SAM HUNT
5	1	DJANGO AND JIMMIE WILLIE NELSON & MERLE HAGGARD
6	5	JUST AS I AM BRANTLEY GILBERT
7	7	THE OUTSIDERS ERIC CHURCH
8	6	PAIN KILLER LITTLE BIG TOWN
9	3	SUMMER FOREVER BILLY CURRINGTON
10	8	OLD BOOTS, NEW DIRT JASON ALDEAN
11	11	ANYTHING GOES FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE
12	10	SPRING BREAK... CHECKIN' OUT LUKE BRYAN
13	—	FOLKS LIKE US MONTGOMERY GENTRY
14	15	CRASH MY PARTY LUKE BRYAN
15	9	OUTLAW IN ME THE LACS
16	14	THE FIRST TIME KELSEA BALLERINI
17	21	GREATEST HITS: DECADE #1 CARRIE UNDERWOOD
18	12	LOVE SOMEBODY REBA McENTIRE
19	16	SOUTHERN STYLE DARIUS RUCKER
20	17	IGNITE THE NIGHT CHASE RICE



A Thousand Horses' major-label debut is out of the gate.



Kenny picks up his 25th Country Air-play chart-topper.

TOP 5 TRENDING COUNTRY SONGS ON RDIO*

1	TAKE YOUR TIME SAM HUNT
2	GIRL CRUSH LITTLE BIG TOWN
3	LIKE A WRECKING BALL ERIC CHURCH
4	SANGRIA BLAKE SHELTON
5	DIME STORE COWGIRL KACEY MUSGRAVES

TOP 5 TRENDING COUNTRY ALBUMS ON RDIO*

1	THE MUSCLE SHOALS RECORDINGS THE STEELDRIVERS
2	DYLAN, CASH AND THE NASHVILLE CATS: A NEW MUSIC CITY VARIOUS ARTISTS
3	THE ESSENTIAL JOHNNY CASH JOHNNY CASH
4	TRAVELLER CHRIS STAPLETON
5	DOLLY DOLLY PARTON

*DATA FROM JUNE 22

TOP 20 BILLBOARD SINGLES

TW	LW	TITLE / ARTIST
1	2	WILD CHILD KENNY CHESNEY WITH GRACE POTTER
2	5	LOVE ME LIKE YOU MEAN IT KELSEA BALLERINI
3	4	SANGRIA BLAKE SHELTON
4	3	LITTLE TOY GUNS CARRIE UNDERWOOD
5	6	BABY BE MY LOVE SONG EASTON CORBIN
6	1	SIPPIN' ON FIRE FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE
7	9	DIAMOND RINGS AND OLD BARSTOOLS TIM MCGRAW WITH CATHERINE DUNN
8	10	TONIGHT LOOKS GOOD ON YOU JASON ALDEAN
9	11	LOVE YOU LIKE THAT CANAAN SMITH
10	12	GIRL CRUSH LITTLE BIG TOWN
11	13	CRUSHIN' IT BRAD PAISLEY
12	14	ONE HELL OF AN AMEN BRANTLEY GILBERT
13	15	KISS YOU IN THE MORNING MICHAEL RAY
14	16	YOUNG & CRAZY FRANKIE BALLARD
15	17	KICK THE DUST UP LUKE BRYAN
16	18	LOVING YOU EASY ZAC BROWN BAND
17	19	HELL OF A NIGHT DUSTIN LYNCH
18	20	LIKE A WRECKING BALL ERIC CHURCH
19	21	CRASH AND BURN THOMAS RHETT
20	22	RIOT RASCAL FLATTS

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TOP 10 AMERICANA AIRPLAY

SOURCE: AMERICANA AIRPLAY CHART

TW	LW	TITLE / ARTIST	TW	LW	TITLE / ARTIST
1	2	THE TRAVELING KIND EMMYLOU HARRIS & RODNEY CROWELL	6	4	THE RUFFIAN'S MISFORTUNE RAY WYLIE HUBBARD
2	1	SOUND & COLOR ALABAMA SHAKES	7	7	SUNDOWN OVER GHOST TOWN EILEEN JEWELL
3	5	DJANGO AND JIMMIE WILLIE NELSON & MERLE HAGGARD	8	—	SOMETHING MORE THAN FREE JASON ISBELL
4	3	SECOND HAND HEART DWIGHT YOAKAM	9	9	THE TRAVELER RHETT MILLER
5	6	TRAVELLER CHRIS STAPLETON	10	11	STILL THE KING: CELEBRATING THE MUSIC OF BOB WILLS ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL



Jason reunited with producer Dave Cobb for the follow-up to their 2013 project, *Southeastern*.

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**NASH Country
Weekly**

COUNTRY FOR LIFE

What do you think about radio consultant Keith Hill saying that women don't want to listen to women on country radio, and that playing too many female artists causes ratings to drop?



I think that's ridiculous. Women should vote other women up. We should empower each other. I love listening to other women. I'm a huge fan of all the women and men country music singers. I think that's just kind of a sexist point of view.

SYDNEY SMITH | Kennesaw, Ga.

I think that's absolutely kind of ridiculous that anyone would segregate anybody from any kind of music or any kind of life-style. Carrie Underwood, LeAnn Rimes and Kelly Clarkson and a

lot of people that play in these country music venues would have something quite different to say. I applaud everybody who gets up and takes the time to give whatever their talent is to whoever will listen and or buy it.

JON STEINICK | Nashville



I don't agree with that. I say play more [female] artists because a lot of the women out there in country music are for the power of women. Like Taylor Swift and Carrie Underwood, they are all for making women stronger, so I think we should be listening to women on the radio.

**DANA WEBER
Linden, N.J.**



I don't believe that's true. Country music right now needs everything it can get, both male and female. I dig the fact that women are really showing their stuff, where they used to hide in the shadows. I think we are going to see a hundred thousand percent increase in female artists, not the opposite. I don't know why he said that, but I believe it sparked an avalanche of discussions of something that seemed to be dying out on radio. So if it helps bring radio to the forefront and it helps bring women to the forefront, then God bless him for saying that.

TERRY LEE BOLTON | Detroit

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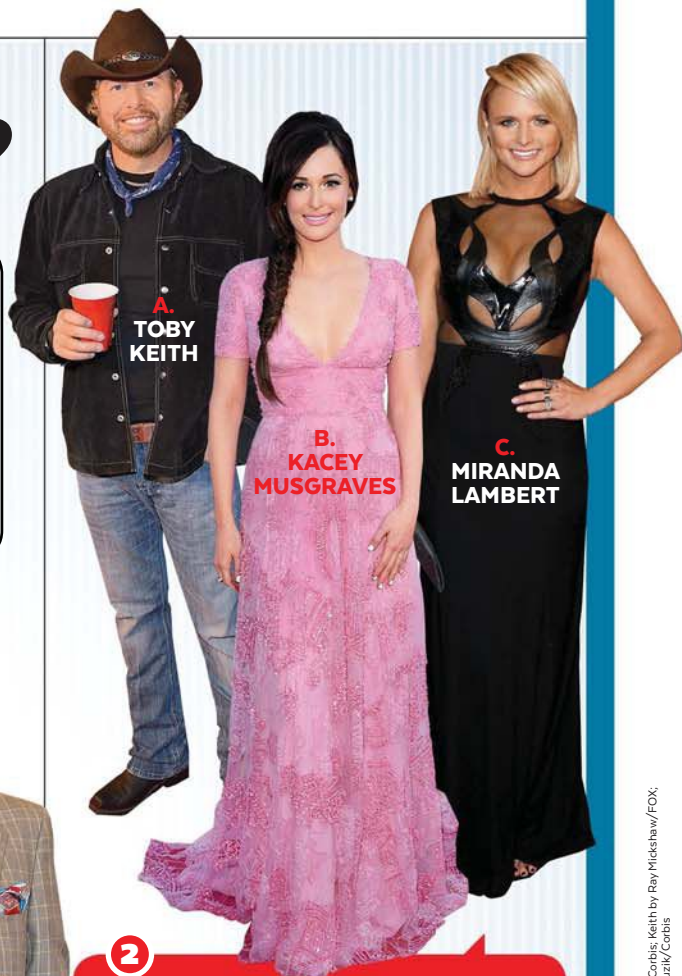
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ANSWERS: 1-C; 2-B; 3-A

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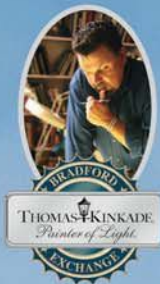
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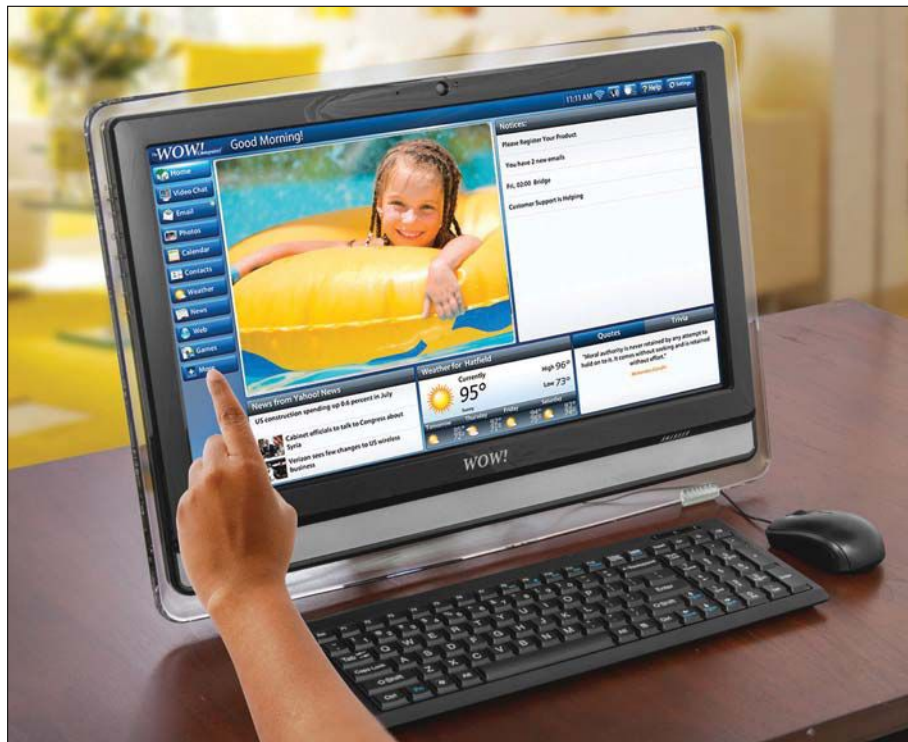


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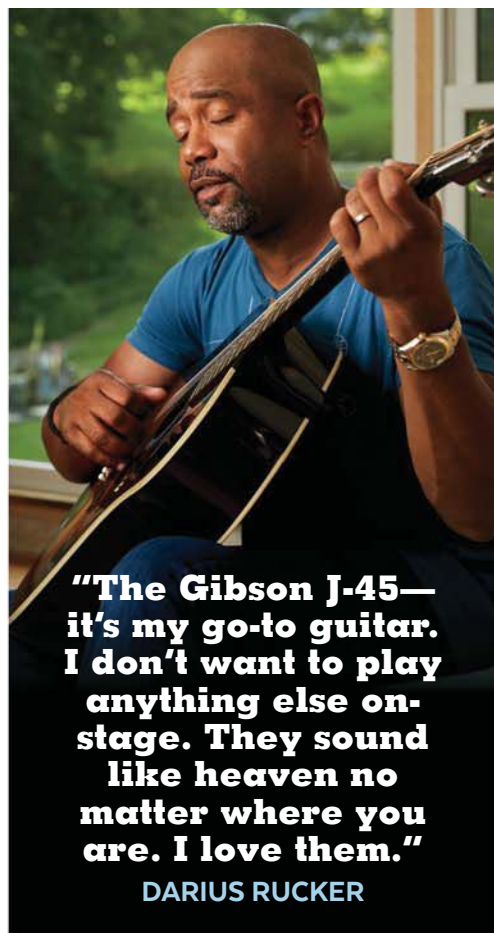
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DARIUS RUCKER

"I've been touring with BRAD PAISLEY this year. I've only gotten to spend a little time with him, but he has offered me some advice. I was going to rehearse 'Whiskey Lullaby' with him to do in the shows. That's a really intimidating song to sing, especially because Alison Krauss did the original vocal with Brad. But he told me to sing it in my own style, the way I would do it, and not try to copy Alison. That



was good advice. I've only done it twice with him so far, but I'm sure there will be more. You can really hear the crowds cheer us on."

MICKEY GUYTON



"I haven't had a No. 1 song yet. I want several of those. I'd love to be nominated for Male Vocalist of the Year. I'd love to be nominated for anything."

CRAIG CAMPBELL

A woman with long blonde hair is leaning against the front fender of a dark classic car. She is wearing a red sleeveless top with lace-up details, denim shorts, and brown cowboy boots. She is also wearing several bracelets and a ring. The background is a bright, sunny outdoor setting with hills in the distance.

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